

CHAPTER 10

STATE QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Intergovernmental coordination is important to the City of Augusta and the successful implementation of city's Comprehensive Plan. Over the years, intergovernmental coordination has involved such as activities as working with neighboring communities on projects of mutual interest, participating in intergovernmental forums and programs, and assessing the potential impact of projects on adjacent communities. Some of the primary intergovernmental coordination tools currently used by the city of Augusta include those outlined below. These and other tools will be considered in developing the Community Agenda.

- **Service Delivery Strategy** – In 1999, Augusta-Richmond County, Hephzibah and Blythe developed a Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) in compliance with the Georgia Service Delivery Strategy Law (House Bill 489 – 1997). The adopted SDS includes a summary of service delivery agreements among the three local governments, copies of applicable agreements and contracts, and maps of applicable service delivery areas. The SDS is designed to promote effectiveness, cost efficiency, and funding equity in the delivery of essential public services. The SDS also includes an Agreement to Resolve Land Use Classification Disputes. The agreement spells out an intergovernmental review process for proposed zoning or land use map changes affecting property within 1,000 feet of a common boundary. In March 2004, the three local governments reviewed the original SDS and determined that it continued to accurately reflect the preferred arrangements for providing local services throughout Richmond County. The SDS will be reviewed and updated as necessary in 2008.
- **Developments of Regional Impact** - The City carries out the applicable responsibilities for intergovernmental review for Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) as required under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. DRIs are defined as large-scale developments that are likely to have effects outside of the local government jurisdiction in which they are located. The DRI review process is designed to improve communication between affected governments and to provide a means of revealing and assessing potential impacts of large-scale developments before conflicts relating to them arise.
- **Regionally Important Resources** - The City carries out the applicable responsibilities for intergovernmental review for Regionally Important Resources (RIRs) as required under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. A RIR is a natural or historic resource that is of sufficient size or importance to warrant special consideration by the local governments having jurisdiction over that resource. The Augusta Canal National Heritage Area is a designated RIR. A management plan for the Canal is in effect. Activities sponsored by the City that may have an impact on the Canal, such as issuing a permit or building a public facility, are subject to intergovernmental review for consistency with the management plan.
- **Regional Planning and Development** – The City participates in a wide variety of regional planning activities related to transportation, economic development, water quality, land use and other issues. The City has been a part of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study since its inception in the mid-1960s. The City is a long-time member of the CSRA Regional Development Center, the CSRA Unified Development Council and the CSRA Unified Development Authority. The City participated in a regional water quality assessment project covering the Savannah River Basin.

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- **Coordination with Fort Gordon** – Fort Gordon has been an integral part of the community for many years and cooperation between the Fort and the City of Augusta has proven mutually beneficial. Below are just a few examples of the ways in which the two entities have coordinated with one another.
 1. **Transportation** – The Fort Gordon Garrison Commander is a voting member of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) Policy Committee. The Fort's Director of Installation Support is a voting member of the ARTS Technical Coordinating Committee. The Policy Committee makes final decisions on the planning and programming of all federally-assisted transportation projects in the ARTS study area. These memberships have been in place for many years.
 2. **Water Resources Protection** – The Planning Commission staff and Fort Gordon staff have served together on the Augusta Watershed Roundtable. The Watershed Roundtable educates the public about water quality issues, participates in water protection events and activities and involves a variety of stakeholders in related activities.
 3. **Water and Wastewater Service** – In 2007, Fort Gordon and the City of Augusta entered into an agreement for the City of Augusta to extend water and wastewater services to the military installation. The extension of these municipal services to the Fort is ongoing.
 4. **Air Quality** – Over the last 10-12 years, the Planning Commission staff and Fort Gordon staff have served together on a number of local and regional air quality initiatives. These include the Augusta Air Quality Task Force, sponsored by the Metro Augusta Chamber of Commerce, the Fall Line Air Quality Study (FAQS), the Ozone Early Action Compact (EAC) and, most recently, the Regional Air Quality Initiative related to fine particulate matter.
 5. **Land Use** – The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance for Augusta-Richmond County was amended in July 2003 to add a section requiring written input from Fort Gordon's Commander on any zoning proposal (rezoning or special exception) affecting property located within 3,000 feet of the installation. The Planning Commission works cooperatively with Fort personnel when issues arise related to land development (e.g. residential subdivisions, commercial uses), property maintenance, and enforcement of local building/land development codes affecting property in the vicinity of the installation.
 6. **Planning and Related Studies** – Planning Commission and city staff work with Fort personnel as installation plans are developed or updated. Examples include the Butler Creek Water Supply Watershed Management Plan (2000) and the Installation Environmental Noise Management Plan (2001) and the Joint Land Use Study (2005). Planning Commission staff served on the technical committee for the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), and the city of Augusta was represented on the JLUS Policy Committee. The JLUS represented an effort to plan for the Fort's future in conjunction with the adjacent units of local government.
- **Coordination with Richmond County Board of Education** – The City works cooperatively with the Richmond County Board of Education in evaluating sites for new schools and processing site

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plans for school construction and improvement projects. A member of the school board serves as an ex-officio member of the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission.

Augusta is a central city in the Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Other counties in the MSA are Columbia, McDuffie and Burke in Georgia and Aiken and Edgefield in South Carolina. There are two other incorporated places in Richmond County, the city of Hephzibah and the town of Blythe. While Hephzibah and Blythe conduct their own comprehensive planning, they work cooperatively with Augusta on such issues as infrastructure planning, public safety, animal control and recreation.

It will also be important for city departments and local stakeholders to work together to implement the plan. Several city departments and other agencies work together to review all subdivision plans and site plans for compliance with applicable ordinances and regulations. Many of the same agencies, as well as the local development community, are represented on the Subdivision Regulation Review Committee. The committee meets quarterly and coordinates any updates or amendments to the 17 "Development Documents" regulating development in Augusta. Quarterly meetings are held to review the status of SPLOST funded projects, giving city departments an opportunity to share information and coordinate activities.

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This chapter lists the state of Georgia's planning objectives, and evaluates the effectiveness of Augusta's current policies, regulations and administration in meeting these objectives. These objectives are intended to provide guidance, or targets, for local governments to achieve in developing and implementing their comprehensive plan. After the Community Agenda is developed, the status of Augusta with regard to these goals and objectives will be updated accordingly.

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Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an "identity," defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Status: Augusta is located at the center of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) and plays a vital role in promoting and preserving a shared regional identity. The architectural styles found in Augusta's central business district and older neighborhoods are reflective of the styles found throughout the region. Local residents, developers and organizations work to preserve and adaptively reuse these historic structures and make them an integral part of heritage tourism and education programs. Augusta is home to a variety of businesses, institutions and industries that provide jobs to residents from throughout the region and have done so for generations. Augusta participates in a number of organizations and initiatives that promote and plan for regional economic development, transportation, tourism, historic preservation and natural resource protection.

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There are many examples of how Augusta contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education. Local arts organizations and museums continuously expose the region's residents to a variety of productions and shows in the visual and performing arts. Businesses throughout the city serve as venues for entertainers from Augusta and the region. Regularly scheduled festivals serve a similar function and help preserve the rich, diverse cultural heritage of the region. Augusta's colleges and universities provide educational opportunities for residents from throughout the region and contribute to the quality of life in many other ways.

Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

Status: The city of Augusta is generally well-prepared to accommodate the type of growth it desires. Elected officials understand the land development process and the vital role that the city plays in the process. The city continues to invest in the infrastructure (water, sewer, recreation facilities, etc.) that facilitates development not only in high-growth areas, but also infill development and redevelopment of older neighborhoods. The city has fairly simple and straightforward development regulations and standards that are updated periodically to meet local objectives and / or state mandates. The city partners with educational institutions and the private sector to assure that the workforce is trained to meet the needs of both existing and new business and industry.

Challenges remain in preparing for and accommodating growth in Augusta. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the areas in the city where growth is likely to occur, but does not identify more discreet areas where growth would be most desirable. The Plan does include a number of policies designed to guide growth to general locations and to protect important natural resources. The presence of new residential subdivisions in remote locations, and the traffic congestion on some two-lane roads are a couple of indications that growth is occurring either too soon or too rapidly in some parts of the city. A comprehensive Capital Improvements Program (CIP) could be an effective tool in guiding growth to desirable locations and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to serve new development. A CIP would also spell out how specific infrastructure projects would be financed and when they would be designed and constructed. Finally, maintaining effective coordination and communication among all of the entities involved in the development process is difficult at times.

Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

Status: Augusta works cooperatively with a number of economic development organizations to ensure that business expansion and development in the community matches workforce skills, contributes to the diversity of the job base and has a long-term, positive impact on the city and region. The City takes an active role in periodically assessing the strengths, assets and weaknesses of the community, and adjusting the economic development strategy in response to changes in these characteristics. Recent examples of such assessments include the JOBS NOW initiative (2001-02) and the Destination 2020 initiative (2003-06).

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The Development Authority of Richmond County’s most recent marketing plan is reflective of these and other initiatives. The Development Authority’s 2007 Marketing Plan targets four industries for growth in the community: life sciences, customer service, aviation and military. These industries match well with such assets as the large and diverse medical community, technically-trained personnel at Fort Gordon, many of whom are retiring” from the military on a regular basis, the presence of several customer service businesses and available sites on and adjacent to Augusta Regional Airport.

The marketing plan was one factor in the successful recruitment of two new customer service facilities to the community in 2007. T-Mobile is on the verge of opening a new 80,000 square-foot facility at the corner of Wheeler Road and Interstate Parkway. T-Mobile will create up to 750 jobs. Automatic Data Processing (ADP) has established operations in an existing facility on Stevens Creek Road and is finalizing plans for a new facility on Flowing Wells Road at Frontage Road. ADP plans to create up to 1,000 jobs within five years.

Educational Opportunities Objective: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

Status: The Richmond County public school system includes 60 schools: eight high schools, ten middle schools, thirty-six elementary schools, three magnet schools, and evening school and two schools for students with behavioral problems. Enrollment is approximately 32,000 pupils. Award-winning schools in the system include Freedom Park Elementary, John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet, A. R. Johnson Health Sciences Magnet and C. T. Walker Traditional Magnet School. Superintendent Dana Bedden, hired in 2007, is working to implement a “blueprint for success” in the school system.

Post-secondary educational opportunities, workforce training and continuing education programs are readily available in Augusta for both traditional and nontraditional students. The Medical College of Georgia is Georgia’s only public institution devoted solely to health sciences education and includes the Schools of Allied Health Sciences, Dentistry, Graduate Studies, Medicine and Nursing. Paine College offers undergraduate degrees in 30 majors, and Augusta State University offers undergraduate and graduate-level degrees in a wide range of fields. Brenau University, Troy University, the University of Phoenix and Savannah River College are other post-secondary institutions located in Augusta and offering a variety of degrees online or at campus. Augusta Technical College, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, offers degrees and diplomas in such areas as allied health and nursing, industrial technology, information and engineering technology and business and personal services.

Employment Options Objective: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.

Status: Data indicate that Augusta businesses and institutions offer a wide range of job opportunities for skilled and unskilled labor. Employment is spread out across such occupation categories as management and professional, services, sales and office, construction and maintenance and production, transportation and material moving.

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A number of programs and services are offered in the community to support job training needs and to assist entrepreneurs. Augusta Technical College coordinates the Georgia Quick-Start Program, a state initiative that trains employees free of charge for new and expanding businesses. Augusta Tech has established the Center for Advanced Technology (CADTEC) College to help CSRA manufacturers compete in the world market through technology transfer. The overall objective of the SRS Community Reuse Organization is to create an environment conducive to technology-based startups, business expansions and to attract new ventures to a five-county region that includes Augusta-Richmond County.

Business incubators are an integral part of the community's strategy to meet the needs of the local workforce and foster new business development. A small business incubator is located near the Augusta Tech campus. The mission of this incubator is to foster regional economic development by supporting entrepreneurs, small/disadvantaged businesses, and businesses expanding to the CSRA area by providing managerial & technical assistance, low office rental rates, and shared access to basic office services and equipment. The Georgia Medical Center Authority operates two incubators for life sciences companies and start-ups.

Heritage Preservation Objective: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Status: Heritage preservation is an integral part of the city's tourism and economic development strategy. Heritage preservation in Augusta is marked by a wide variety of activities. Individuals and organizations are actively involved in preserving the past and at the same time make historic resources and traditions a part of the city's future. Examples of some of the major activities include preparation of National Register nominations, rehabilitation of historic buildings, sponsoring cultural festivals and participation in historic preservation and heritage education programs.

Property rehabilitation and reuse is an integral part of historic preservation in Augusta. Every day property owners and investors rehabilitate historic structures for use as homes, apartments, offices, and retail establishments. Examples of these private projects are found throughout downtown Augusta and in several neighborhoods. Most such projects are privately financed, but some owners also take advantage of rehabilitation tax credit and tax abatement programs.

There are currently eight (8) National Register Historic Districts in Augusta, encompassing approximately 6,200 properties. Thirty-four (34) properties are listed individually on the National Register. These districts and properties represent many aspects of Augusta's history and include the central business district, industrial facilities, urban neighborhoods, institutional buildings, and rural resources.

Three areas - Downtown, Summerville and Olde Town - have also been designated as local historic districts under the city's historic preservation ordinance. The ordinance specifies that the Historic Preservation Commission review work affecting the exterior appearance of any property in a local historic district prior to a building permit being issued. The objective of the design review requirement is to protect the integrity of designated historic properties and ensure that new development is

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compatible with the district's historic character. In addition to the districts, six individual properties have been designated as historic under the local ordinance.

The 12-member Historic Preservation Commission meets monthly to consider applications for Certificate of Appropriateness, review ongoing preservation projects, and discuss other matters of interest. The Commission has taken steps to raise community awareness about historic preservation and works cooperatively with others to implement preservation planning projects.

Open Space Preservation Objective: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.

Status: The city of Augusta has adopted a Community Greenspace Program in accordance with state regulations. The goal of the program is to permanently preserve twenty percent (20%) of Augusta's land area as greenspace. The Greenspace Program identifies areas for protection, including lands along the Savannah River, within Phinizy Swamp, and along the major creeks (Butler, Rae's, Rock, Rocky, Spirit and McBean). To date acquisition and donation efforts have resulted in the permanent protection of land along the Savannah River and parts of Butler, Rae's and Spirit Creeks.

The Central Savannah River Land Trust administers the Greenspace Program on behalf of the city. The Land Trust is a non-profit organization capable of accepting donations of land and conservation easements designed to permanently protect sensitive environmental resources. A broad-based group of citizens and organizations are involved in the Greenspace Program. Among them are the Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy, the Augusta Canal Authority, Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce, Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the Builders Association of Metro Augusta, Savannah Riverkeeper, the Georgia Forestry Commission, and several neighborhood organizations.

Augusta's land use pattern is generally characterized by low-density development. Local development regulations do offer some alternatives for higher density development. In 2003 Augusta's zoning regulations were amended to accommodate conservation subdivisions. A conservation subdivision is a subdivision in which a large percentage of the site is set aside as permanently protected greenspace. The remainder of the tract is then developed at a higher density than normally allowed in the use zone. Additional open space policies and initiatives will be considered in developing the Community Agenda.

Environmental Protection Objective: Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Status: Over the years, the city of Augusta has worked with a variety of stakeholders to identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas. Examples of environmentally sensitive areas in the community include the Savannah River and its tributaries, including the associated floodplains, wetlands, prime farmland and groundwater recharge areas. Some of the organizations that the city partners with to protect these resources include the Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy, the Georgia Forestry

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Commission, the CSRA Land Trust, the Savannah Riverkeepers and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

The city's recent regulatory initiatives include the adoption of ordinances and regulations to protect aquifers and groundwater recharge areas, water supply watersheds, and the Savannah River basin, and amending the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to increase restrictions on developing within the 100-year floodplain. The city is also involved in projects to assess water quality in the Savannah River basin, has implemented stormwater management and water quality monitoring programs in compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act, and has completed water and sewer system improvement projects designed to improve water quality and reduce groundwater pollution. The City also works with stakeholders to develop solutions to environmental problems, to foster the sharing of information related to environmental quality and protection, and to educate children about the importance of environmental protection and stewardship.

With regard to air quality, the city is involved in ongoing efforts to monitor air quality, educate the community about the importance of clean air, and implement initiatives to improve air quality. In the last 10 years the city has been a partner with other stakeholders in projects to review regional air quality data, stay informed about state and federal initiatives to improve air quality, and assess alternative local and regional initiatives to improve air quality. Among the initiatives now in place in Augusta is a seasonal open burning ban. This ban, which is in effect from May 1 – September 30 each year, is designed to limit open burning during the hottest, sunniest time of the year when weather conditions can intensify air quality problems.

Regional Cooperation Objective: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.

Status: Augusta is a member of, or has representation on, several regional organizations that serve as forums for identifying shared needs and finding collaborative solutions to problems. Examples of these organizations include the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Regional Development Center, the CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority, the Richmond / Burke Job Training Authority and the Augusta Regional Transportation Study. Most of these organizations focus on the implementation of programs and services mandated by state or federal law.

Augusta is to some extent in competition with neighboring jurisdictions for jobs, private investment and residents. Political jurisdiction boundaries and other factors make this a fact of life in any metropolitan area. This can be a barrier to cooperation on any number of issues. However, Augusta does work with neighboring jurisdictions on such issues as air quality, public safety, major transportation projects, protection of water resources and solid waste disposal. The City will continue to participate in organizations with a regional focus and foster regional cooperation on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Transportation Alternatives Objective: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

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Status: The city provides alternative modes of transportation within the city limits. Augusta Public Transit (APT), a city department, provides fixed-route and paratransit public transportation service to the residents of Augusta. APT currently operates 10 fixed routes within the city with a peak fleet of 13 buses. APT also operates paratransit services for disabled persons, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, using seven paratransit vehicles.

A fairly extensive network of sidewalks is present within the old city limits, but there are very few in the neighborhood and commercial centers of the former county. Sidewalks are located along some sections of the arterial and collector roads, but do not form a network that pedestrians can utilize. Sidewalks also are located adjacent to many of the public schools. Off-road facilities used by walkers and joggers include the Augusta Canal towpath, Savannah River levee, and paved trails at some county recreation centers. Where sidewalks are not present, especially on local or neighborhood streets, pedestrians often walk in the road.

Even where sidewalks exist, there are some evident limitations. Some sidewalks are very narrow, have obstructions (e.g. utility pole, light pole) and are not designed to accommodate the disabled and handicapped. Others suffer from a lack of routine maintenance. In some cases resurfacing projects often result in the finished grade of a street being at or near the top of the curb. This causes safety problems and allows storm water to run off the street and onto a sidewalk.

An active participant in the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS), the city is continuously planning and promoting alternative modes of transportation. The ARTS Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, completed in January 2003, is a blueprint for development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities over the next 20 years. The plan includes an inventory of the current regional bicycle and pedestrian network, design standards for new facilities, a list of recommended projects (with cost estimates), and strategies for implementing the projects. Several of the projects in the plan have been implemented or are under construction. Several others are programmed for construction as part of road widening and improvement projects. Over the years, the city has also supported the work of others in the community to develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including the Augusta Canal Authority, Augusta State University and various neighborhood associations.

Regional Solutions Objective: Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.

Status: Augusta participates with other entities in finding regional solutions to shared needs. Some examples include the interconnection of the Augusta and Aiken County public transit systems, the seasonal open burning ban effective in Richmond and Columbia Counties and participation in the assessment and protection of the region's water resources. Many of the issues confronting the city are local concerns. However, the City will continue to foster regional cooperation on issues of mutual interest and concern, especially with regard to the protection of natural resources.

Housing Opportunities Objective: Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.

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Status: Augusta’s housing stock includes single-family units (detached, attached, manufactured homes) and apartments in a variety of styles, sizes and densities and in several different price ranges. Generally speaking, most people who work in the city can afford to live in Augusta if they so choose. The city’s development standards and regulations are flexible enough to accommodate the variety found in the housing stock. As part of the Community Agenda, the city might want to consider changes to the standards to encourage more housing that includes multiple styles and densities in individual developments and more housing / living arrangements for the growing elderly population.

Affordability is an issue for some households, especially low-income households. These households are either paying a high percentage of their income for housing and utilities, or find it difficult to become homeowners for the first time. The city supports non-profit organizations that provide affordable housing for low-income households and housing for the homeless, but the need for affordable housing and permanent housing for the homeless are greater than existing resources. The presence of a significant number of vacant, dilapidated units in some neighborhoods is another ongoing issue. Some neighborhoods also have vacant lots suitable for infill housing.

Traditional Neighborhood Objective: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

Status: Traditional neighborhood development patterns that mix land uses, include a variety of housing types and create a pedestrian-oriented environment are rare in Augusta. The city’s zoning ordinance separates most land uses into separate and distinct districts. Residential uses are permitted in a commercial zone, which has facilitated the creation of many loft apartments in downtown Augusta in recent years. The zoning ordinance also provides for “planned unit developments”, but the PUD regulations and standards pre-date the recent “neo-traditional” movement and have been used only in a few instances. A number of older neighborhoods in Augusta do have many of the characteristics of traditional neighborhoods, and could serve as models for adopting development standards that result in more traditional neighborhood development elsewhere in the city.

Infill Development Objective: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

Status: Augusta’s existing comprehensive plan includes policies to encourage infill development and the redevelopment of older residential and commercial areas. The city has done neighborhood-level planning for years in order to identify the needs of older neighborhoods and implement projects that address those needs. This has resulted in new housing, commercial development and public facility improvements in many neighborhoods. In 1997 the Augusta Land Bank Authority was created for the purpose of returning non-tax-generating properties to a productive use. The Land Bank Authority works with the city, private developers and non-profit organizations to implement redevelopment projects and put property back on the tax rolls.

In July 2003 the Augusta Commission adopted the Target Area Master Plan. The plan is a revitalization strategy and redevelopment plan for an area encompassing the following inner-city neighborhoods: Laney-Walker, Bethlehem, Turpin Hill and part of Uptown. The overall goal of the plan “is to create a

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sustainable, economically diverse neighborhood that contains housing, jobs, and educational and workforce development opportunities”. The Augusta Commission recently (December 2007) hired a consultant to develop a detailed implementation strategy for this redevelopment area.

At a broader level, the city has taken steps to improve public facilities throughout the city in order to maintain the attractiveness of established neighborhoods and facilitate infill development. A number of sales tax projects have resulted in improvements to roads, bridges, drainage structures and recreation facilities. The Utilities Department has extended sanitary sewer service to some established neighborhoods that lacked such service for many years. The department has also upgraded water service in many existing neighborhoods to improve reliability and reduce the dependence on groundwater sources of supply.

Sense of Place Objective: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

Status: Downtown Augusta has been and remains a focal point of the community. It is where Augusta was founded in 1736 and is significant in many areas, including architecture, commerce, industry, landscape architecture, religion, transportation, government and education. Downtown Augusta has many of the characteristics of an area that reflect a sense of place.

The community has long recognized the uniqueness of downtown. For the last 25 years a wide variety of stakeholders, including the city of Augusta, have worked to implement a downtown development plan prepared for Augusta Tomorrow, Inc. Augusta Tomorrow is a private, non-profit that has worked “to serve the community at large by planning, promoting, and implementing the revitalization and development of Augusta with particular emphasis on the city center.” Implementation of the projects and initiatives in the Augusta Tomorrow plan have resulted in millions of dollars of private and public investment in downtown and the adjoining neighborhoods. Now that most of the projects in the original plan (and more recent updates) are complete, Augusta Tomorrow is preparing to develop a new plan for downtown.

Some other areas within the city evoke a sense of place. This includes some older, historic neighborhoods that maintain more traditional lot layouts, street patterns and architectural styles. These neighborhoods are predominantly residential, but do have other land uses present. The history and significance of these areas has been documented, and some have been designated as National Register and / or local historic districts.

Creating a sense of place for some other parts of the city remains a challenge. The general pattern, style and scale of development in Augusta over the last 40-50 years are very similar to other communities of similar size. If not for the presence of some major landmarks, a non-resident might not be able to distinguish some parts of Augusta from similar areas in another city. The comprehensive plan update affords the community an opportunity to explore the options, tools and techniques for establishing a sense of place throughout the city.

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